corresponding to the imported contents, and stores the generated rights information. The contents imported to the personal computer 1 are permitted for check-out to the portable devices 5-1 through 5-3, or permitted for check-in from the portable devices 5-1 through 5-3, based on the rights information.

The memory card 9-2 is inserted into a cellular telephone 7, and contents which the user has purchased by operating the cellular telephone 7 (e.g., contents downloaded via a cellular telephone line) are stored therein along with corresponding rights information. The predetermined contents stored in the memory card 9-2 are permitted to be imported based on the rights information, and moving thereof is not permitted.

The memory card 9-2 storing the contents is mounted in a slot in the personal computer 1. The personal computer 1 imports the contents stored in the memory card 9-2 mounted thereto. The personal computer 1 generates rights information permitting only check-in or check-out corresponding to the imported contents, and stores the generated rights information.

The memory card 9-3 is inserted into a PDA (Personal Digital Assistant) 8, and contents which the user has purchased from an EMD server 3 for example via a network 2 by operating the PDA 8 are stored therein along with

corresponding rights information. The predetermined contents stored in the memory card 9-3 are permitted to be imported based on the rights information, and moving thereof is not permitted.

The memory card 9-3 storing the contents is mounted in a slot in the personal computer 1. The personal computer 1 imports the contents stored in the memory card 9-3 mounted thereto. The personal computer 1 generates rights information permitting only check-in or check-out corresponding to the imported contents, and stores the generated rights information.

The memory card 9-4 is inserted into a portable device 5-4 with recording functions, and contents which the user has recorded by operating the portable device 5-4 are stored therein along with rights information generated in a corresponding manner. The predetermined contents stored in the memory card 9-4 are permitted to be imported based on the rights information, and moving thereof is not permitted.

The memory card 9-4 storing the contents is mounted in a slot in the personal computer 1. The personal computer 1 imports the contents stored in the memory card 9-4 mounted thereto. The personal computer 1 generates rights information permitting only check-in or check-out corresponding to the imported contents, and stores the generated rights information.

In the following description, the portable devices 5-1 through 5-4 will be referred to simply as portable device 5, unless there is the need to distinguish between the individual portable devices 5-1 through 5-4, and the memory cards 9-1 through 9-4 will be referred to simply as memory card 9, unless there is the need to distinguish between the individual memory cards 9-1 through 9-4.

Fig. 2 is a diagram describing the configuration of the personal computer 1. A CPU (Central Processing Unit) 11 performs the actual execution of various application programs for realizing the later-described functions and the Operating System. ROM (Read-Only Memory) 12 generally stores, of the programs used by the CPU 11 and parameters used for computation, the fixed data. RAM (Random-Access Memory) 13 stores programs used for executing by the CPU 11 and parameters which change according to the execution thereof. These are mutually connected by a host bus 14 configured of a CPU bus or the like.

The host bus 14 is connected to an external bus 16 such as a PCI (Peripheral Component Interconnect/Interface) bus or the like via a bridge 15.

A keyboard 18 is operated by the user when inputting various instructions to the CPU 11. A mouse 19 is operated by the user when pointing instructions or selections on the screen shown on a display 20. The display 20 comprises a